

VITAL SIGNS

WVU SCHOOL OF NURSING • 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW



Dean's Message

Mountaineers Forever



It takes a special individual to pursue the path of nursing. Not only must nurses be highly skilled and knowledgeable,

but they must also be kind, compassionate and courageous.

At the West Virginia University School of Nursing, we pride ourselves on graduating nursing leaders. As courageous Mountaineers, we go first. Our students are the pioneers for new and innovative programs. Our faculty lead uncharted research territory. Our alumni excel in their respective fields across the country.

In this year's edition of *Vital Signs*, you will see examples of some of the great work happening here. I am sure it comes to you as no surprise that we were ranked as both the No. 1 RN program and the No. 1 RN to BSN program in the state. As the highest entry-level degree into the nursing profession, the value of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing cannot be understated.

We established a partnership with BridgeValley Community and Technical College, offering a seamless 3-1 pathway for students to transition from their associate degree to become a baccalaureate-prepared registered nurse. Our partnership with the Aspiring Nurse Program allows select students to receive financial assistance in exchange for a work commitment. And our partnership with the Arellano University-International Nursing Program provides students in the Philippines an opportunity to receive three years of our curriculum in their home country

“Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage.”

— Maya Angelou

before relocating to Morgantown for their senior year.

Thanks to a \$2.6 million gift from the Bedford Falls Foundation, we received the second largest total of any department across the WVU System during the 2024 Day of Giving. Their gift will support our LPN to BSN, Accelerated BSN and PhD programs, as well as our Arellano partnership.

We are so grateful for all the support of our alumni, donors and friends. We could not achieve what we do without you. You are invaluable members of our WVU School of Nursing family, and we look forward to our continued work together.

Once a Mountaineer, Always a Mountaineer.

Let's Go!

Tara Hulsey
PhD, RN, CNE, FAAN
Dean and E. Jane Martin Endowed Professor
WVU School of Nursing

VITALSIGNS

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ON THE COVER

Students from the second cohort of the DNP Nurse Anesthetist Program celebrated their graduation in August 2024 with a celebratory cap toss on Mountaineer Field at Milan Puskar Stadium.

The WVU School of Nursing is ranked the No. 1 online RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program in West Virginia by RNToMSN.org, a leading nursing education website.

The RN to BSN program offers a 100% asynchronous online BSN education to licensed registered nurses who are graduates of diploma and associate degree nursing programs.

“Going back to school can be intimidating, but this ranking shows how achievable a BSN degree can be,” said Dr. Brad Phillips, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs. “We know affordability is a factor for higher education, so it’s important to note we offer in-state tuition rates for the RN to BSN program, regardless of residency.”

The [RNToMSN.org](https://www.rntoMSN.org) rankings are based on affordability, program quality, reputation and student outcomes. Multiple data points are used to score nursing schools for each category, including program costs, outside awards, admissions selectivity, graduation rates, student debt and earnings and more.

Additionally, the WVU School of Nursing is ranked as the 2024 Best RN Program in West Virginia by [RegisteredNursing.org](https://www.registerednursing.org), marking the

second year in a row for the recognition. On a grading scale of 100, RegisteredNursing.org scored WVU at a 98.54, making it the top-ranking RN program of the 26 in the state.

Rankings from the organization are based on schools that support students toward licensure and beyond, especially through the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses pass rates. Nursing graduates must pass the NCLEX-RN to become registered nurses. In 2023, the Morgantown and Keyser campus graduates boasted a 100% first-time NCLEX pass rate, with the Beckley Campus close behind at 97%.

“We are grateful to receive these program recognitions,” said Dr. Tara Hulse, Dean of the WVU School of Nursing and E. Jane Martin Endowed Professor. “No matter the modality, online or in-person, our nursing students receive a top-notch education from expert faculty who support them throughout their program.”



Being a first-generation college student comes with a host of challenges, but three WVU School of Nursing students share how they paved their individual paths to success.

Bella Botero, a senior in the BSN program, said she was initially nervous about sharing that she's first-gen. "Now that I've been here, though, I have been very proud to be a first-generation student. It's something not everyone gets to represent."

As a WVU Nursing Ambassador, Botero has been able to share her experiences with potential nursing students. After graduation, she wants to work in the ICU and

eventually go back to graduate school.

Alexis Pate, an MSN-FNP student, graduated with her BSN from WVU four years ago. Her time with WVU Nursing instilled in her a sense of lifelong learning, so she wanted to advance her degree.

"I feel really proud of myself, and that's not something I feel like I say a lot. I don't think I could have done it if I hadn't had my undergrad experience at WVU," Pate said. "I felt like I found a sense of community here. It wasn't as difficult of a transition as I thought it was going to be."

Grace Wilson, also a senior in the BSN program, said she was

drawn to WVU because of the affordability of the college. As a Pennsylvania resident, she said she struggled to find a local school due to the cost.

She said she's glad she landed at WVU. "It's like home away from home, which is really nice." Her nursing school and clinical experience at WVU Medicine J.W. Ruby Memorial Hospital have provided her with an opportunity to see nursing specialties and patient cases she wouldn't have been able to experience elsewhere. After graduation, Wilson hopes to work at her community hospital, either in the ER or in the psych unit.

The WVU School of Nursing is boosting nursing education opportunities with a \$2.6 million grant from the Bedford Falls Foundation to address workforce challenges within the Mountain State and across the nation.

The grant funds support coordinated philanthropic efforts

by Bedford Falls founders William “Bill” Conway and his late wife, Joanne Barkett Conway, to increase the nursing workforce throughout the eastern United States.

The WVU School of Nursing is working to educate more nurses amid a nationwide shortage caused by changing

demographics, greater demand for health care, a rise in retirements and other factors. The Bedford Falls grant to WVU will provide student scholarships and faculty support for four programs aimed at producing well-trained nurses to meet health care needs in West Virginia and beyond.



“Nurses play a vital role in the health care team and in our state,” said Dr. Clay Marsh, chancellor and executive dean for WVU Health Sciences. “This grant allows us to focus on our land-grant mission of serving the people of West Virginia and providing top-tier training to our students.”

The grant funding will help WVU expand two existing degree programs to new sites. The Licensed Practical Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (LPN to BSN) program — the only one of its kind in the state of West Virginia — will be offered at the Keyser Campus, simultaneously boosting the number of BSN-educated nurses in the state and creating opportunities for practical nurses to advance their careers. Additionally, the WVU School of Nursing is in the planning stage of offering its Accelerated BSN program at a new campus location in the state’s Eastern Panhandle.

The grant will also bolster an international nursing program with Arellano University, a private university in the Philippines that previously partnered with the now-closed Alderson Broaddus University in West Virginia. Program participants will complete their first three years of BSN education at Arellano University and transfer to WVU for their final year. The Bedford Falls grant will provide scholarships to cover the difference in tuition cost for students during their year at WVU, as well as faculty support.

The WVU Health System and other area health care providers have ample employment opportunities to offer these Conway Scholars when they graduate.

“This substantial investment from the Bedford Falls Foundation will make a lasting impact for our students and faculty, as well as for the expansion of our programs. The Conways have created a legacy of support for nursing education, and the WVU School of Nursing is honored to be among its beneficiaries.”

**— Tara Hulsey
Dean and E. Jane Martin
Endowed Professor
WVU School of Nursing**

Finally, the grant will support the existing PhD program in Morgantown, significantly expanding available scholarship support for future nursing educators. Following graduation, Conway Scholars who receive a PhD will be required to teach for three years at a school within the region. Many are expected

to continue teaching in the region thereafter, filling a need for PhD-educated faculty to replace retirees in the coming years.

“This substantial investment from the Bedford Falls Foundation will make a lasting impact for our students and faculty, as well as for the expansion of our programs,” said Tara Hulsey, dean and E. Jane Martin Endowed Professor. “The Conways have created a legacy of support for nursing education, and the WVU School of Nursing is honored to be among its beneficiaries.”

The Bedford Falls Foundation supports a variety of charitable causes, with a particular focus on nursing education. The Conways’ philanthropy in that area was inspired by a conversation Joanne had with a waitress about her struggle to afford a nursing degree and, over the last 11 years, the couple’s generosity has supported nursing education at 17 universities.

“With a critical nursing shortage nationwide, we are thrilled to be expanding our geography to include West Virginia,” Bill Conway said. “We look forward to this new partnership with WVU and to creating more nurses for a region that needs them.”

The Bedford Falls Foundation grant was awarded through the WVU Foundation, the nonprofit organization that receives and administers private donations on behalf of the University, in conjunction with WVU Day of Giving.

Thanks to the Jean P. Stanhagen Scholarship, a Bridgeport Campus student was able to pursue his dream of becoming a nurse.

Miguel Carunungan, who graduated from the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program in August, found the Stanhagen Scholarship invaluable in continuing his education.

“Especially having a family, it has been immensely helpful,” Carunungan said. “It allowed me to pursue my dreams without having to worry about the financial burden.”

Carunungan has long dreamed of becoming a nurse. He had enrolled as a traditional student in nursing but found he was not emotionally or academically ready for the challenge of the program.

After serving in the U.S. Army as a combat medic and pursuing other educational paths, Carunungan volunteered as an EMT, which reignited his passion for medicine. He decided to return to nursing, this time in the Accelerated BSN program at Bridgeport.

“As a veteran, nontraditional student, the thing that I love most about my accelerated-BSN cohort here at the Bridgeport Campus is that – for the first time and unlike my first bachelor's – I don't feel like the odd duck out. Many of my classmates share similar life experiences, have families, and are of a similar age.”

He plans to work in critical care and the emergency department while obtaining advanced certifications to ultimately become a flight nurse. Thanks to the generosity of the Stanhagen family, Carunungan is one step closer to realizing that dream. He encourages potential donors to consider his story, along with other students who want to pursue nursing but struggle with financial barriers.



“Your donation can provide scholarships to aspiring nurses who might not otherwise have the means to pursue their dreams. When you donate to the WVU School of Nursing, you are investing in the future health and well-being of our society. But beyond the tangible benefits, a donation sends a powerful message – a message that says, ‘I believe in the power of nurses,’ and I want to be a part of their journey.”

– **Miguel Carunungan**, Graduate from the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program

Three Beckley Campus students will serve the nation's veterans during a nurse residency through VA-STEP, previously known as VALOR, at the Beckley VA Medical Center.

Logan Ellis, Larisa Griffith and Kaitlyn Sizemore were the three students accepted in the VA Student Trainee Experience Program, which provides juniors in an accredited BSN program with incredible opportunities.

"I feel very honored to participate in this program because it allows me the opportunity to help those who have served for me and my country," said Sizemore, of Shady Spring.

The students complete 400 hours of service between June and September. Afterward, they are eligible to work at the VA during their senior year.

"Serving veterans means honoring their service and recognizing the unique circumstances they face," said Ellis, from Bolt.

"Being able to serve the veteran population is a privilege, a chance to give back to those who have given so much for us. It is a way to express gratitude and ensure that they receive the respect and support they deserve."

Ellis continued, "It would be an honor to continue to develop my nursing career through serving veterans at the VA after graduation."

For Griffith, who grew up in Camden-On-Gauley, the program means being able to serve the veterans within her community.

"Veterans have sacrificed so much to help our country and the people in it," Griffith said. "It is important to me to attempt to give back to these veterans just as they have given to us."

GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT



Cherilyn Zeltmann

Cherilyn Zeltmann, a Class of 2024 graduate and Army ROTC Cadet, was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant and will serve active duty as a Nurse Corps officer.

Zeltmann, of Manorville, New York, will attend Army Nursing Basic Officer Leadership Course at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas. Upon graduation from BOLC, she will serve a full-time, three-year commitment in an Army hospital at a location to be determined.

Army ROTC is the premier leadership development program on campus and a four-year progressive leadership development program. During classes, leadership labs, physical training and field training exercises, cadets learn firsthand what it takes to lead others, motivate groups and conduct missions as an officer in the U.S. Army.

Zeltmann and 13 other cadets were commissioned during the Spring 2024 Commissioning Ceremony.

Pictured from left are the most recently selected students for the Beckley VA Medical Center's VA-STEP program: Logan Ellis, Larisa Griffith and Kaitlyn Sizemore.

The WVU School of Nursing has established a partnership with the Arellano University-International Nursing Program to continue providing and enhancing nursing education locally and abroad. The inaugural program launched at Alderson Broaddus University in 2005, but with the announcement of the university's

closure in December 2023, leaders at WVU School of Nursing offered a teach-out for the international nursing students. Upon seeing this support and the quality of the nursing education offered, program directors at Arellano University selected the WVU School of Nursing as its partner school to continue the program.

“Being a partner with Arellano University-International Nursing Program is truly a win-win for both institutions,” said Dean Tara Hulseley. “While we currently offer many study abroad opportunities, this is our first global educational partnership. WVU Nursing students will benefit from matriculating with students from another culture, and Arellano



students will gain access to nursing employment opportunities in the U.S.”

The program is a 3-plus-1 curriculum, with Arellano students remaining in the Philippines for the first three years of their BSN degree and relocating to Morgantown, West Virginia, to complete their senior year at the WVU School of Nursing. The students will be on an F1 Visa, meaning they can remain in the U.S. for up to three years while they apply for permanent residency if they choose to do so.

“Through this partnership, instructors at the Arellano University-International Nursing Program will teach our identical curriculum for students from their freshman to junior year,” said Dr. Brad Phillips, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs and Director of International BSN Programs. “These students are receiving an American education in the Philippines, down to the student handbook.”

The first cohort of students who are part of the new partnership were admitted in August 2024 and will be on campus in Morgantown for Fall 2027. From Fall 2024 through the next three fall semesters, former Alderson Broaddus students who were part of the partnership will be admitted to WVU for the teach-out.

Dr. Joan Propst, former Alderson Broaddus Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, said the program was initially created as a way to provide an American curriculum in nursing education to students in the Philippines.

“The program has been exciting and challenging and has provided the opportunity for student education and exchange,” Propst

said. “I have worked with the INP since its inception, and it has been my pleasure to work with valued colleagues from Arellano and AB to bring this program into reality. I am delighted to see it continue at WVU and to have the program embraced so heartily by colleagues there.”

In January 2024, Arellano University-International Nursing Program Director Dr. Emerita C. Mendoza, Director for International Academic Linkages Philip M. Flores and Professor Carla May C. Gonzales visited Morgantown to lay the groundwork for the collaboration.

“Arellano University-International Nursing Program is thankful that, in our search for an academic institution with the same passion for educating nurses and an openness to relevant innovation, we have found WVU,” Dr. Mendoza said. “WVU, with a reputable nursing program, took the leap and entrusted us to adapt and implement the first three years of their BSN curriculum. In return, we will faithfully adhere to WVU’s curriculum and standards, ensuring that our students receive an education and training that is comparable to that of our American counterparts.”



Left: Dr. Brad Phillips, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs and Director of International BSN Programs, led members of the Arellano University-International Nursing Program on a tour of the WVU Health Sciences Campus in January. (Photo Credit: Carla Gonzales)

Above: Dean Hulsey (left) and President Gee (center) met with members of the Arellano University-International Nursing Program Dr. Emerita Mendoza (second from left), Carla Gonzales (fourth from left) and Philip Flores (right).



Researchers at WVU have identified a set of diagnostic metabolic biomarkers that can help them develop artificial intelligence tools to detect Alzheimer's disease in its early stages, as well as determine risk factors and treatment interventions.

The study, published in the *Journal of the Neurological Sciences*, aimed to determine which metabolic biomarkers are most relevant to Alzheimer's disease and then train an AI model to predict the likelihood of whether the disease has or could develop.

For the research, scientists chose the deep learning method of AI because of its versatile approach for predicting complex biological phenomena and its ability to use vast volumes of data and complex algorithms to train a model.

"The deep learning method using artificial neural networks, which are inspired by the layered structure of the brain's neurons and their computations, has reached unprecedented prediction performance for complex tasks," said Kesheng Wang, a WVU School of Nursing professor who led the study. "It has been shown deep learning techniques are more accurate for Alzheimer's disease diagnosis in comparison to conventional machine learning models."

In medicine, biomarkers are measurable indicators of the severity or presence of a disease. People would most commonly associate them with the numbers on their bloodwork report showing cholesterol or glucose levels, for example.

Metabolic biomarkers exist in the molecules of cells, tissue and body fluids, showing the interaction between genes and lifestyle, such as food choices and environment. At that level, scientists can better understand changes in a person's health and risks of developing disease.

"Alzheimer's disease may start years or even decades before clinical symptom onset, therefore it is crucial to identify predictive biomarkers in the preclinical stage so medical science can develop strategies to prevent the progression of the disease," Wang said.

Early detection of Alzheimer's disease is also critically important for drug development and application,

Wang added, as well as for diagnostic and therapeutic approaches to prevent loss of function and diminished longevity.

For the study, data from the Alzheimer's Disease Neuroimaging Initiative was obtained from 78 people diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and 99 people with normal cognitive function. Participants ranged in age from 75 to 82.



In addition to the WVU School of Nursing research, groundbreaking neuroscience efforts are happening at the WVU Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute, led by Dr. Ali Rezaei.





Using LASSO software, researchers imported 150 metabolic biomarkers and selected 21 as most relevant to Alzheimer's disease.


"The metabolites are part of the glucose, amino acid and lipid metabolisms," Wang said. "Some of the metabolites are correlated with clinical biomarkers — such as plaques — cognitive measures and hippocampus volume associated with Alzheimer's patients."

The hippocampus is the area of the brain which is often damaged first by Alzheimer's disease and shows shrinkage.

Researchers then tested multiple deep learning models until they were able to build the one that achieved the highest accuracy for assessment.

Wang said studies using deep learning for detecting Alzheimer's disease are still in the early stages and additional research is needed. He and his team are working on a project to integrate data from proteins and metabolism using deep learning methods.

"The metabolic basis of Alzheimer's disease is still poorly understood and the relationships between systemic abnormalities in metabolism and Alzheimer's disease pathogenesis are unclear," Wang said. "This study shows there is potential to identify metabolic biomarkers that are predictive of Alzheimer's disease diagnosis and progression."



Through a new dedicated partnership between the WVU School of Nursing and BridgeValley Community and Technical College, students will be able to seamlessly transition from their associate degree to become a baccalaureate-prepared registered nurse.

The 3-1 pathway allows BridgeValley students to complete their two-year associate degree, then take the NCLEX licensure exam to become an RN. Upon passage of the exam, students will remain with BridgeValley for the first year of the WVU Nursing RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN) program.

WVU Health Sciences Chancellor and Executive Dean Dr. Clay Marsh, Dr. Brad Phillips, Dean Tara Hulseley and BridgeValley Dean of Nursing Kent Wilson gathered at the Health Sciences Pylons for the formal partnership announcement.

For their final year, students will enroll with WVU to complete the remainder of the curriculum, fully online, and earn their bachelor's degree in nursing.

"This partnership provides a seamless pathway for students in central and southern West Virginia who want to become baccalaureate-prepared nurses," said Dean Tara Hulseley. "With higher educational degrees, nurses can provide improved patient outcomes, access more career opportunities, and receive higher levels of income. They can become leaders in their organizations, or even pursue a graduate degree with the foundation of a BSN."

Many students pursue an associate degree, rather than a bachelor's degree, due to financial constraints or lack of access. But this pathway provides students in rural West Virginia with a more affordable pathway for a BSN degree, as three years of their four-year program will be completed at a community and technical college tuition rate.

"This partnership underscores our commitment to access and affordability," said Kent Wilson, dean of nursing and emergency services at BridgeValley. "We are thrilled for this innovative partnership and program because it will open the nursing field to more passionate young people in our area."

BridgeValley students can also transition easily into the BSN curriculum with faculty members with whom they are already familiar. The WVU curriculum includes evidence-based practice and research, ethics and healthcare policy, and community and population health. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, an abundance of research shows higher levels of safety, quality and patient outcomes among BSN-prepared nurses.

"That's where the BSN extends beyond the ASN," explained Dr. Brad Phillips. "The BSN curriculum gives students a comprehensive understanding of safe care, which extends beyond the hospital-based setting."

"Through this partnership, students can experience the unique benefits of both institutions, fostering their growth and success," said Betty Craze, Associate Professor for Nursing at BridgeValley. "We are serious about helping our state overcome nursing shortages and training our local students to enter the healthcare field. This innovative program will produce more well-prepared, top-tier nursing graduates — and that's exactly what we want."



Preston Woodburn-Camp

Preston Woodburn-Camp, a CRNA who earned his BSN from WVU in 2010, was introduced as the 2023-24 President of the West Virginia Association of Nurse Anesthetists.

A resident of Fort Ashby, Woodburn-Camp works for an independent CRNA practice serving patients at WVU Medicine Potomac Valley Hospital, a 25-bed critical access facility in Keyser. The practice provides anesthesia and related services for a wide variety of surgical procedures, including general, orthopedic, urologic and other specialties, as well as emergency care.

"It is a real honor to be named president of the WVANA," said Woodburn-Camp. "It comes with a great deal of respect for the position and a desire to do well to serve the CRNAs and student nurse anesthetists of West Virginia and, more importantly, to promote the health of all West Virginians."

SPREADING Smiles

No matter the campus location, WVU School of Nursing students, faculty, staff and alumni are actively engaged in their communities, spreading smiles whenever and wherever possible.

Whether they are collecting donations for charitable organizations in the state, providing education and training to others about health and well-being, or traveling around the globe to make nursing connections, our SON family is always making a positive difference in the lives of others.

Keep up the great work, Mountaineers!

Top Left: During Diversity Week, the Charleston Campus collected donations for Covenant House, a Charleston-based organization aiming to eradicate homelessness and hunger and create well-being in the Greater Kanawha Valley.



Bottom Left: An interprofessional group of volunteers for MUSHROOM (Multidisciplinary Unsheltered Homeless Relief Outreach of Morgantown) gather weekly to support individuals experiencing homelessness in the community.

Bottom Right: Charleston Campus representatives Dr. Theresa Cowan and Dr. Kathy Atassi offered WWU Day at the Legislature attendees a chance to learn how to locate a heartbeat on the Student Auscultation Manikin (SAM).





Top Left: Through a collaboration with Hamamatsu Municipal Nursing College in Japan, Coordinator of Global Programs Dana Friend and WVU nursing student Sydney Cain traveled to Japan to tour the school, observe classes, see their graduation ceremony and learn more about their culture.



Top Right: Nursing reps Tonya Thompson, Laura Vollmer, Danielle McGinnis, Mountaineer Mascot Mikel Hager, Stephanie Young, Brad Phillips and Andrea Bailey attended a WVU Health Sciences Interprofessional Education (IPE) event, which promotes collaboration and understanding between disciplines.



Middle Row, Left: During Diversity Week, Bridgeport Campus students Courtney Kovar, Kayla Kelly, Riley Bennett and Roger King volunteered during the annual Save a Life Day in Harrison and Randolph counties, where they distributed Narcan to residents and provided training on usage to potentially save lives during an overdose.



Middle Row, Right: During their weekly clinical rotation at the Student Health Center, Keyser Campus seniors provided education and supplies, such as fresh produce and hand sanitizer, to keep folks on campus healthy during the fall season.



Bottom: Jordan Gray, a WVU School of Nursing alum and a nurse from Oak Hill Middle School, offered a lesson on proper hand-washing techniques to second graders at New River Primary.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Greta Schmidt

For Greta Schmidt, a BSN student in Morgantown, her calling to the nursing field was solidified when her lifeguard training allowed her to save a young boy's life.

Greta, of Cranberry Township, PA, grew up swimming competitively. She decided to become a lifeguard because the job aligned with her interests, and she has always had a passion for helping others.

"I assisted in saving a young boy at my community pool," Schmidt said. "My extensive training as a lifeguard, instructor, and swim lesson coordinator prepared me to jump into action. It was almost like second nature to know what to do in that situation."

Schmidt made the call to 911 before assisting the staff in administering life-saving care to the boy. At a later ceremony, Schmidt and her colleagues were presented with the "Lifesaving Award for Professional Responders" from the American Red Cross.

It's Two Girls!

**Bertha D. Bebe
and Baby Jill**



To enhance the educational experience of nursing students, the WVU School of Nursing Keyser Campus recently unveiled a new high fidelity manikin. Equipped with a fetus to teach proper prepartum, labor, delivery and postpartum care, as well as clinical situations unrelated to maternity, the manikin will assist students in practicing hands-on patient care in a simulated setting.

The Keyser Campus, located at WVU Potomac State College, hosted a naming contest for the manikin among nursing students and Potomac State students, with Dr. Cynthia Persily, former Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences at West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission making the final selection and announcement. The names “Bertha D. Bebe” and “Baby Jill,” a nod to Gov. Jim Justice’s daughter, were revealed during a special ceremony.

The purchase of the manikin was made possible through funding provided by the Governor’s Nursing Workforce Expansion Program and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. In the 2022 grant allocation, WVU School of Nursing’s five campuses received a collective \$2 million to support nursing recruitment, retention and education.

“Simulation is such a critical part of nursing education, so we are extremely grateful for the funding that made this purchase possible,” said Dr. April Shapiro, Keyser Campus Chair. “Bertha and Baby Jill are vital members of our manikin family to enhance our students’ clinical judgments skills in providing obstetric care.”

Shapiro said with Bertha’s augmented reality capabilities and the use of their new Microsoft HoloLens devices, students can see into the womb to have a deeper understanding of complicated fetal positions and how emergencies evolve.

“This new manikin will be a true asset for our nursing students as they learn about obstetrics and gynecology,” said Dean Tara Hulsey. “Through the Governor’s Nursing Workforce Expansion Program, each of our five campuses have received the support necessary to grow our student base and graduate highly skilled and compassionate nurses needed to alleviate the shortage.”

A \$50,000 gift from Drs. Susan and Neal Newfield, establishing the Murdoch Newfield International Community Fund, is an endowment that provides financial support for global education programs within the WVU School of Nursing.



“By gaining a better understanding of diverse populations and perspectives, nursing students who participate in global education programs can become more well-rounded, compassionate and culturally competent healthcare providers,” Dean Hulseley said. “I am incredibly grateful for the legacy of learning that the Newfields have created for our students.”

Susan is an associate professor at the WVU School of Nursing and chair of Family and Community Health, while Neal is an adjunct instructor of psychology at the university. He retired from the School of Social Work at the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences in 2019.

Together, they have collaborated on a study abroad trip for WVU students to visit Vietnam and Cambodia for the past 18 years.

“One of the things we noticed over the years is how much having a month-long experience in another country working with and getting to know people on a personal level really made a difference in our WVU students’ lives,” Susan said.

“A lot of them really changed the course of their career paths, and they came back to us years later saying, ‘This was a significant impact on my life.’”

The couple’s gift was made through the WVU Foundation, the nonprofit organization that receives and administers private donations on behalf of the university.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



CHANGING COURSES

Brenna Lansden

Brenna Lansden, previously a news anchor and public relations professional, decided she wanted to make a difference in Appalachia through healthcare.

She enrolled in the Accelerated BSN program at WVU, where she said her professors played a pivotal role in helping her become the nurse she is today: “I couldn’t have hoped for better role models who genuinely cared for their students and patients.”

Lansden also received her Post-MSN FNP Certificate from WVU, paving the way for her to become a family nurse practitioner and an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC).

“I will continue learning and growing to provide quality health and lactation care to patients in the outpatient clinic,” Lansden said. “In doing so, I aspire to be a part of the growing trend of change and progress in Appalachia, working towards creating a better place for my family and future generations.”

The Summit Ahead Podcast

Congratulations, CLASS OF 2024

Welcome to our alumni family,
Class of 2024!

The WVU School of Nursing celebrated graduates in Beckley, Keyser and Morgantown, but this year, a new ceremony was added to the commencement lineup. Our Bridgeport Campus celebrated its first graduating cohort of Accelerated BSN students in August. We also celebrated our second graduating class of DNP Nurse Anesthetist students.

Dean Tara Hulsey addressed the graduates during the Morgantown ceremony in May, encouraging them to follow the values of the WVU School of Nursing – integrity, excellence and inclusiveness – all throughout their careers.

She also quoted Maya Angelou: “You have no idea what your legacy will be because your legacy is every life you touch,” and she encouraged graduates to “be that legacy.”

To learn more, visit nursing.wvu.edu/students/commencement.



Left: Keyser Campus graduates gathered for a group photo during their May commencement ceremony.

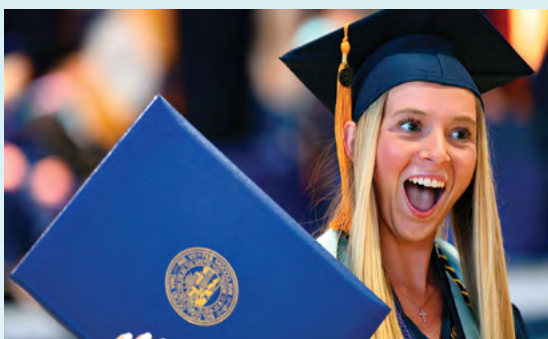


Right: Two graduates from the second cohort of the DNP Nurse Anesthetist Program, Katherine Brown (left) and Brittany Hall (right), posed for a photo during their August ceremony.



Top Left: Sara Nayeem, one of the first graduates at the Bridgeport Campus, received the Student Scholar award during their pinning ceremony.

Top Right: The Bridgeport Campus celebrated its first graduating cohort in August during a pinning ceremony at the Robinson Grand Performing Arts Center.



Second Row, Left: After receiving her diploma, Morgantown graduate Alyssa Stout is all smiles across the stage.

Second Row, Middle: Morgantown graduates show off their decorated graduation caps.

Second Row, Right: Dr. April Shapiro pins Keyser Ambassador Jessica Maynard during their commencement ceremony.



Third Row, Left: WVU Tech President T. Ramon Stuart presents nursing graduate Issac "Ike" Boone with his diploma.



Third Row, Right: Nursing graduates join in singing Country Roads together.

Fourth Row, Left: Dr. Joy Maramba gathers nursing graduates for a selfie.

Fourth Row, Right: Graduate John Carter poses for a photo with his diploma.



Students seeking their BSN from the WVU School of Nursing are eligible to apply for the WVU Medicine Aspiring Nurse Program, which provides direct financial assistance to nursing students at participating schools in return for a three-year work commitment at a hospital in the WVU Health System.

While the support is invaluable to all students, the Accelerated BSN students are oftentimes those in greatest need of financial support, as scholarship options are more limited for second-degree students.

“I’m a mom of a 3-year-old boy,” shared Kayla Kelly, a 2024 ABSN graduate from the Bridgeport Campus.

“The program helps pay my tuition and other expenses . . .”

CHLOE

“I learned about the Aspiring Nurse Program. . . I knew I had to apply.”

HALEY



“

. . . I could focus on my schooling to be the best nurse that I can be.

KAYLA

”

“While going to school, being a parent, and working part time, the financial assistance meant that I had to worry less about the everyday stresses of money and working so that I could focus on my schooling to be the best nurse that I can be.”

Chloe Sidick, a 2024 ABSN graduate from the Morgantown Campus, has also found the Aspiring Nurse Program incredibly helpful as a second-degree student: “The program gave me the opportunity to help pay my tuition and other expenses I experienced while completing my nursing degree.”

Haley Tibbs, who received her Bachelor of Science in Health Science, fell in love with nursing during an internship at a clinic in her hometown of Parsons. She said she chose WVU because of the NCLEX pass rates and the positive feedback about the faculty and facilities.

“I learned about the Aspiring Nurse Program from one of the faculty shortly after I was accepted into the ABSN program, and I knew I had to apply,” she said. She plans to graduate in 2025 and continue working in a West Virginia hospital to give back to the community.



To assist nursing students with the transition into the BSN program, the SOAR Peer Coaching Program aims to cultivate a sense of belonging and build resilience, self-compassion and stress reduction skills.

The SOAR (Success, Outreach, And Resilience) Peer Coaching Program builds upon the popularity of the My Success program, which is offered to students in the Accelerated BSN program.

“This is not so much for academic success as it is for personal success,” said Dr. Tina Antill Keener, Director of the BSN Program. “For example, our peer coaches can help new students understand how to reframe their support system or how to find time to study.”

Tonya Thompson, ABSN Coordinator, created the foundation of the program, and Keener worked with her to incorporate resilience and self-compassion components. The program has been especially beneficial for ABSN students, who are nontraditional and oftentimes face multiple challenges, including balancing school, work and family responsibilities.

“Our Fast Track students have loved it and expanding it to our traditional undergraduate programs is something I’ve wanted to do for the last several years,” Keener said.



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



EXPANDING ACCESS

Shatika Jones

Shatika Jones, a Faith Community Nurse who received training from the WVU School of Nursing, is working with West Logan Church to build a nurse-led access to care point within her community.

Jones was looking for ways to help others outside of her job as a surgical nurse. A church member and fellow nurse connected her to the Faith Community Nursing program at WVU. She realized it was the perfect opportunity to help more people in her community.

She plans to offer monthly classes for not only the congregants of the church but also the surrounding communities on topics like nutrition and healthy living.

“There was a void in my life,” Jones said. “I felt like there had to be more than just going to work, clocking out, and going home.”



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